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## FEATURES

### 40 years of silence

16/09/2022



**For years Noël Le Graët, president of the French Football Federation, and other officials at the federation have been covering up multiple cases of sexual abuse of underage players.**

*By Romain Molina*

Noël Le Graët (81), the octogenerian president of the French FA, the FFF, has decided to sue French magazine So Foot for libel after it had published detailed allegations of sexual misconduct against him, allegations which were widely reported in France's media.

So Foot published several text messages that Le Graët had sent to employees of the federation, which included:

«Come to my place for dinner tonight.»

«I prefer blondes, so if you're up to...»

«You're quite pulpy, I would definitely put you in my bed.»

But his case is not isolated. It is in fact, as Josimar has found, only the latest in a long list of lurid allegations of sexual abuse and harassment within the FFF, many of which in which the French FA has systematically tried to suppress.

“When something happens, you keep your mouth shut. That’s how it works.” A former member of the FFF agreed to speak to Josimar on condition of anonymity. “Other than that, they’re too powerful. The second you speak about the abuse, you’re out of the game. Not only the FFF but also the LFP (professional football league), the clubs. I mean, did you know about the many cases we have been facing in the last couple of years? What did we do to protect the kids?»

There have been several cases of sexual abuse, blackmail and harassment, also to include underage players (boys and girls) involving coaches, scouts, agents and senior officials in France’s top flight. [PSG, Lyon and Troyes are among the many Ligue 1 teams who have suppressed these issues without taking any proper action.](#) The same happened at the French FA chose to remain silent, keeping the information away from the country’s authorities. “They never spoke to me, to us, about it”, says Thierry Rey, the sports minister under then president, François Hollande. “Neither [did they speak to] the sports minister or the facts should have been taken very seriously.”

The FFF president Noël Le Graët admitted in an internal document seen by Josimar that sexual abuse involving underage players took place at its national training facility.

Clairefontaine.

### **Still in the game**

Since the mid-1980s, the FFF has received multiple complaints of sexual abuse, h inappropriate behaviour towards underage boys and girls. Although some individuals removed from their posts after investigations into the complaints, two of these individuals allowed to keep their coaching licences and continue their careers as if nothing had happened.

The first is Angélique Roujas, a former French international player with 51 caps and in charge of the women's section at the national training centre at Clairefontaine, was removed in 2013 after the FFF had learned that she had had sexual relations with underage players but continues to work with young female players in France. After serving as general manager of Metz's women team (where she worked with girls aged 6 to 13) between 2014 and 2017, she took over the U19 women's team at Ligue 2 club ESOF La Roche, where she still works.

The second is David San José, who was fired by the FFF in 2020 over inappropriate behaviour towards a 13-year-old at Clairefontaine, but has also continued to work with young players at Olympique de Valence.

In the internal document dated 30 October 2013, FFF president Noël Le Graët wrote:

*“One boarder mentioned that Madame Angélique Roujas took advantage of her seniority, her weakness and her hierarchical link to obtain such relations (intimate ones). The fact was confirmed from 2004 and 2005, a period in which the concerned boarders were in Clairefontaine.”*

*We started an internal investigation with several interlocutors and we discovered that an INF (Clairefontaine) employee told us he already has suspicion on the nature of the relations maintained by some boarders and Madame Angélique Roujas.(...). He certified that*

*spend their weekends at Madame Angélique Roujas' home.*

*One former boarder at Clairefontaine who left in 2011 gave the name of a teammate who had an intimate relationship with Madame Angélique Roujas during her scholarship at Clairefontaine.*

*Besides, the head of the women academy in Tours, Madame Dos Santos, told us that she also had an intimate relationship with a former boarder at Clairefontaine, from the same generation as the girl we brought to her attention the same suspicions.*

*On 30 september 2013, during her preliminary interview, Madame Angélique Roujas denied the allegations but nevertheless admitted having received boarders in her room at the school. Willingly, we have not retained any criminal qualification in this letter of findings. The main difficulty in this file is that most of the people who testified wish to remain anonymous.*



N°

Le Président

Monsieur le procureur de la  
République  
5 Place André Mignot  
78011 VERSAILLES CEDEX

Paris, le 30 octobre 2013

Objet : Signalement de certains faits

Monsieur le procureur de la République,

Je tiens à porter à votre connaissance des faits graves, qui nous ont été récemment rapportés et qui peuvent être constitutifs d'une infraction pénale.

En l'occurrence, d'anciennes pensionnaires de notre institut National de Formation (INF) de Clairefontaine (adresse de l'INF : DOMAINE DE MONTJOYE - 78120 - CLAIREFONTAINE), qui entendent à ce jour garder l'anonymat, nous ont rapporté qu'elles avaient eu des « relations intimes » répétées, consistant notamment en des relations sexuelles, avec leur entraîneur, Madame Angélique ROUJAS.

Madame Angélique ROUJAS, née le 15 septembre 1974, est salariée de la Fédération depuis le 15 août 2004 en qualité d'entraîneur au centre national féminin, avec le statut cadre. Son lieu de travail est fixé à Clairefontaine. Son domicile est situé 9 Place des Hauts de l'Eure 28300 JOUY.

Ces pensionnaires étaient pour certaines mineures.

L'une de ces pensionnaires précise que Madame Angélique ROUJAS a profité de son « état de faiblesse et du lien hiérarchique » pour obtenir de telles relations. Les faits dateraient des années 2004 et 2005, périodes durant lesquelles les pensionnaires concernées étaient à Clairefontaine.

Nous avons mené une enquête interne auprès de divers interlocuteurs et avons découvert qu'un ancien salarié de l'INF nous dit avoir eu des soupçons sur la nature des relations entretenues avec certaines pensionnaires et Madame Angélique ROUJAS et cite spontanément les pensionnaires ci-dessus. Il certifie que les jeunes filles passaient des week-ends chez Madame Angélique ROUJAS et les avoir croisées en compagnie de celle-ci dans son village le samedi et le dimanche.

Il résulte également du témoignage de certains salariés actuels c prestataires de service (entretien, restauration), que Madame / disposait d'une chambre dans le bâtiment de l'internat des filles y et qu'elle y recevait parfois certaines pensionnaires, tardivement heures, correspondant à l'extinction des feux.

Une ancienne pensionnaire de l'INF ayant quitté le centre en 20 camarade qui aurait eu une relation intime avec Madame Angélique scolarité à l'INF.

De plus, la responsable du pôle féminin de Tours (Madame DOS : qu'une joueuse du pôle, ancienne pensionnaire de l'INF, de la r précédente, a porté à sa connaissance les mêmes soupçons.

La FFF a décidé d'engager une procédure de licenciement pour fa Madame Angélique ROUJAS. Le 30 septembre 2013, à l'occ préalable, Madame Angélique ROUJAS a nié les faits reproct toutefois avoir reçu des pensionnaires dans sa chambre à l'internat.

La lettre de licenciement pour faute grave de Madame ROUJAS octobre dernier. Volontairement, nous n'avons pas retenu de qualifi lettre de licenciement.

La principale difficulté dans ce dossier est que la plupart des pe souhaitent conserver l'anonymat.

Nous sommes conscients que cette situation peut constituer un freir vérité et nous demeurons à votre disposition pour faciliter les éve vous estimeriez utiles. Le Directeur de l'Administration Générale de Arnaud CUSTODY en charge de ce dossier, qui a recueilli certa portés à votre connaissance au moyen de la présente, est à vo renseignement ou élément complémentaire.

Je vous prie de croire, Monsieur le procureur de la République, en l considération.

C  
MG

## “They did nothing”

The FFF says all coaches are subjected to a “systematic check of their integrity” b granted a licence, and that any criminal convictions would prevent it from being r Nevertheless, the federation has been accused of failing to take appropriate action with allegations of sexual aggression and harassment, notably at its prestigious C academy.

Two former FFF employees have also claimed that they raised concerns about the handling of the allegations, only to be told not to talk about them by Brigitte Henr FFF figure from 2011 to 2021 who is now the president of CNOSF, the French Ol Committee.

François Blaquart, the FFF technical director from 2011-17, who sacked Roujas and said this to Josimar: “I removed these people immediately. Beyond that, I don’t know what the FFF did, it’s not my job.”

In 2014, the women’s section moved from Clairefontaine to Insep, the national institute on the outskirts of Paris. “It was for logistical reasons”, says Blaquart. “That was true but also because we needed to handle the problems, it’s true.”

A former international tells Josimar she was a victim of Angélique Roujas, She does not want to be named. “I was a victim at Clairefontaine – I know what happened and I know how to rebuild myself. Even today, I don’t want to talk publicly about it because it’s painful and I’m not sure that I will be supported. I told some senior people inside the federation, including Brigitte Henriques, the vice-president at the time, but what happened? Nothing. There was nothing.”

Melissa Plaza, who retired from football in 2013 after winning two senior France titles, says that she felt threatened professionally by individuals at the FFF when she raised allegations of abuse and harassment in an interview with *L’Équipe* last October after the release of the book, *Pas pour les filles?*

“It’s a widespread issue because it’s happening at club level as well”, she says. “Be careful when talking freely. If you do, you can say goodbye to your career and all the sacrifices you’ve made over all these years.”

Another former director of the FFF told Josimar that “the *fédération* is like a hair salon – everyone talks to everyone. They all know about these cases, but they get buried under a policy of silence. They are like ostriches with their heads in the sand. If you

out.”

Josimar has looked at a number of cases which have left the FFF with questions to

## **Angélique Roujas**

The one involving Roujas is still causing particular concern inside the FFF and French women's football. On 25 October 2013, Roujas was dismissed without compensation as the head coach of the women's football at Clairefontaine – the world-famous centre established in 1988 in the Rambouillet forest – after being found to have had sexual relations with under

Five days later, Noël Le Graët, the president of the FFF, wrote to the local prosecutor to do by law, being a civil servant. “He was pressured to do it because the national team threatened to strike”, a star player at the time tells Josimar.



Angelique Roujas

“We threatened the national team with refusal to play if they were not allowed to allow the coaching staff to leave the national team. Why they made that decision a decade of

In his official statement, Noël Le Graët detailed the accusation

Roujas, that she had sexual relations with underage girls in 2004 and 2005, providing

from a former boarder who claimed Roujas “took advantage of her state of weak hierarchical link” to have relations with her. “The FFF has decided to initiate a disciplinary procedure for serious misconduct against Mrs Angélique Roujas”, Le Graët stated.

According to four government officials at the time, including the then state secretary Thierry Braillard and sports minister Valérie Fourneyron, no effort was made to make them aware of the case, although it was required by French law. Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, minister of national education, women’s rights, youth and sports, told Josimar that she had never come to me. The FFF had the obligation to report it [to me] but they never did.

The police investigated allegations made by one former international from 2004, but after two years the case was closed because the allegations were judged to have passed the statute of limitations. By then, Roujas was working at Metz, and, according to sources, more than one player complained to the FFF about Roujas’s behaviour at Clairefontaine.

“Brigitte Henriques basically told me to shut up”, remembers a former senior member of the FFF. “Henriques was vice-president of the federation. She was very clear about Angélique Roujas. We didn’t speak about it.”

Two other employees have claimed that Henriques told them to remain silent. “She was the head of women’s football and didn’t move a single finger to help the girls”, says a former player-guard who worked at Clairefontaine.

According to documents seen by Josimar, a former France international said she “asked [Henriques] how the federation could let Angélique take a job at Metz. She told me that the investigation was ongoing and since it wasn’t over, the federation couldn’t do anything.”

According to article 85, section five of the FFF’s general rules, the federation could not



action against Roujas, who was dismissed after it was claimed that she took advantage of “the weakness” of underage players in order to have sexual relations with them. “The issue of issuing a licence, or its withdrawal, could also be applied for the same offences (against honesty or honour) even if they are not subject to a penal sanction”, state the FFF.

Roujas has consistently **denied the allegations**. “I absolutely dispute the assertion that I shared the same bed with a minor”, she wrote in response to an article in L’Équipe. Roujas is now in charge of the youth section at her former club La-Roche-sur-Yon.

### **David San José**

San José was responsible for organising non-football education at Clairefontaine and was **dismissed for inappropriate behaviour** after sending love messages to a 13-year-old player at Clairefontaine in 2013. “Je t’aime mon bell”, he wrote in dozens of messages seen by the entire team.

He insisted that the boys’ weigh-ins were done without underwear,

Nevertheless, he continued to work in football and obtained his Uefa A licence five years later, supported by a certificate signed by Le Graët.

“How am I supposed to know he was fired for his behaviour at Clairefontaine?” asked Jean-Luc Vivant, the general manager of Olympique de Valence who went to hire San José. “He didn’t tell anyone. So how can the clubs know?”

Again, the FFF could have used article 85 of its statutes to prevent San José from obtaining a licence. Dozens of players told Josimar that the FFF “hid what happened” and “needed an internal investigation”. A roommate of the alleged victim, Hedi Mehnaoui, told Josimar that he never asked him anything [...] If the FFF is saying now they investigated, they are lying. According to the article 40 of the French penal code, it was the duty of FFF to rep

allegations. “They didn’t do it”, remembers the sports minister at the time, Valérie  
[The New York Times](#) and [L’Equipe](#) reported other inappropriate behaviours toward  
boys after he left Clairefontaine.

## **Élisabeth Loisel**

Loisel, a former defender who won 40 caps for France, was coach of the national  
for a decade. She stayed at the FFF after leaving that post in 2006, helping young  
obtain their licences, She remains a Fifa instructor.

Two former players say that in 2001 they complained that Loisel was forcing play  
with her in order to be selected for the national team. Josimar understands that sin  
were made to the FFF in 2004 and 2006 but never investigated. “I told my players  
go to Clairefontaine but if they wanted to go there’ll be some risks”, says a former  
women’s club, who did not want to be named, to Josimar.

According to several senior officials, the FFF president, Noël Le Graët, questioned  
suitability to take on a job with a youth national team. “Well, we can’t really let her  
“, he said during a meeting. Nevertheless, she stayed in position.

Gérard Prêcheur, the former director of the women’s section at Clairefontaine who  
Loisel, also accused her of selecting players on the basis of their sexual orientation  
interview with the police who was investigating the Roujas case. “In 2004, I expressed  
to leave. I had two divergences of approach with Élisabeth Loisel, the national team  
Firstly, I favoured the technical aspect and she favoured the athletic one. Secondly  
favoured also some players because of their [homosexual] sexual orientation.”

## **Marc Varin**

In October 2021, the FFF was found by a French court (*les prud'hommes*) to have “security obligations” towards an employee who was a victim of sexual harassment: an employment tribunal judged against the financial director, Marc Varin, but sources inside the FFF he had been treated “like a victim and a hero” in the weeks before.

During a meeting of the executive committee, Varin was presented as a “very brave man who suffered with his family. It’s terrible what they’ve done to him. He’s an amazing person.” People were scandalised by the way the FFF treated the victim and the people who supported her favour. Isolated and pressured, at least four employees left the federation.

“We have to ask ourselves something: Is it normal that so many cases happen inside the federation?”, the former FFF director says to Josimar.

### **Gaëlle Dumas**

In May, the former France youth coach Gaëlle Dumas left her post after complaining about harassment made against her by underage girls at the Blagnac centre of excellence owned by FFF. The complaints were first sent to the administration in charge of the children in the *département* of Haute-Garonne.

According to the Tribunal de grande instance (Regional Court) of Toulouse, Dumas is charged with “abuse of authority and violence over minors”. She will face trial in

### **Other cases**

Josimar’s investigation has also raised questions about other cases. They include a former France women’s coach Francis-Pierre Coché who was sacked for sexual blackmail and harassment in the 1980s. The FFF has never publicly communicated its decision.

Sources have also claimed the FFF has failed to investigate allegations of moral

harassment against Yves Ethève, who has been the president of la Ligue de la Réunion for 40 years and [is currently facing a criminal trial](#).

Jacky Fortepaule, the former president of la Ligue du Centre, was found guilty [and given a one year suspended jail sentence for sexual and moral harassment](#). During the trial, he spoke openly about the inaction of the FFF.

In August, Daniel Galletti, the president of the refereeing regional commission of Paris-Ile de France, was forced to quit his position after his bosses confronted him about sexual blackmail and harassment. Galletti was also involved with the FFF as a “referee observer”. Yet, again, the FFF didn’t say a word – just like they remained silent when they had sexual relations with a 16 year-old girl he treated in Clairefontaine, according to documents seen by Josimar.

Josimar has also received emails from several families and coaches asking for help about sexual abuses happening inside their own club. In each case, the persons involved in Josimar they didn’t receive assistance or sometimes even an answer.

All the politicians mentioned (former sports minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem and Jean-François Fourneyron, former state secretary for sports Thierry Braillard, and former sports minister, then president, Thierry Rey and Nathalie Iannetta) confirmed to Josimar they were not involved in any of these cases.

The FFF, Brigitte Henriques and the league of Paris-Ile de France didn’t answer or

According to the French Law, [article 434-1, 434-3 and 434-4](#), not informing the authorities if you are aware of a crime could be sanctioned with three years of jail and 45 000 eur

*If you have any knowledge about sexual abuse in football, please get in touch with Molina using [romainmolina@protonmail.com](mailto:romainmolina@protonmail.com).*



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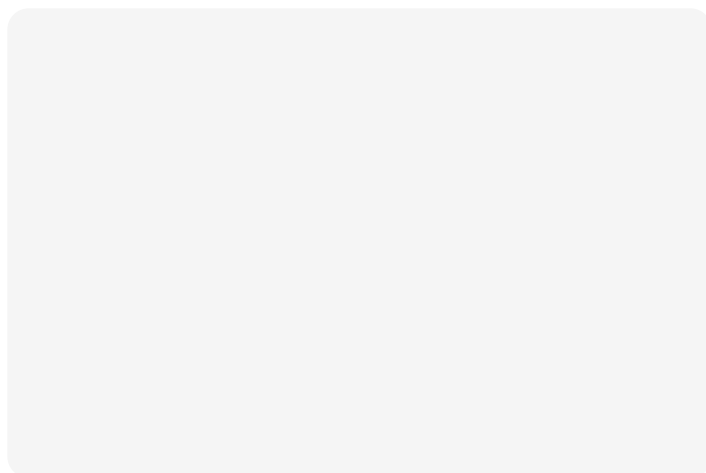
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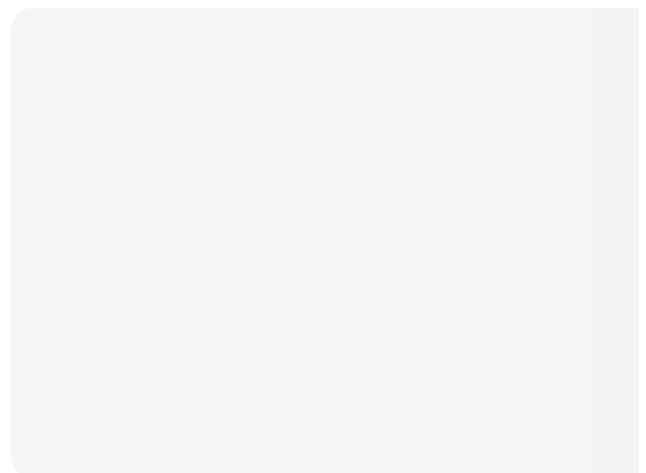
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